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National Small Business Ombudsman Reviews Excessive Federal Regulatory Enforcement

St. Louis...Community and business leaders, concerned about excessive fines and burdensome enforcement of federal regulations, will discuss their concerns with the U.S. Small Business Administration's National Ombudsman at a Regulatory Fairness Board Hearing in St. Louis on April 14, 2004, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon at the Center for Emerging Technologies, 4041 Forest Park Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63108. Free parking is at the southeast corner of Sarah and Forest Park Avenue.

This formal forum offers small business owners and representatives from business and trade associations a chance to discuss openly, without fear of retaliation, their concerns about federal compliance practices in Region VII, which includes the states of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa.

"One of our biggest concerns small business owners face is unfair enforcement of federal regulations," said National Ombudsman Michael Barrera. "They worry about telling their stories because they fear retaliation by federal agencies."

"Small business owners want to play by the rules and comply with federal regulations," he said, "and we want to encourage federal regulators to assist business owners with compliance rather than go straight to the penalty stage."

SBA district and regional offices around the country are hosting meetings such as this one. "By working together with small businesses and federal agencies, we can make the federal regulatory

process more cooperative and collaborative, encouraging a less punitive and more small-business friendly regulatory environment,” Barrera said.

The Office of the National Ombudsman was created by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 (SBREFA). The act established 10 regional fairness boards, served by 50 small business owners from across the country.

Paul Kinyon, Realty Advisors LLC, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is chair of the board in Region VII. Information gathered from the hearing will be shared with government officials in the ombudsman’s annual report to Congress and with directors and managers of federal regulatory agencies to help them with their enforcement actions.

The April 14 hearing is open to the public. However, those wishing to participate in the discussion should contact Rose Garland, Economic Development Specialist, in St. Louis at 314-539-6600, ext. 232, to register for this hearing.

Comments and concerns about federal agency enforcement actions can be addressed directly to the Office of the National Ombudsman at 1-888-REGFAIR. For more information on the national ombudsman and this hearing, visit the National Ombudsman’s web site at www.sba.gov/ombudsman.

For information on SBA’s programs and services, call the SBA district office in St. Louis at 314-539-6600, or visit the SBA web site at www.sba.gov.

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The SBA helps small businesses each year with access to capital and credit through its financial assistance programs, as well as providing technical training and business start up and expansion counseling, disaster loans for businesses and home owners, and federal contracting and procurement assistance. For more information about the SBA, go to www.sba.gov or call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U-ASK-SBA or TDD 704-344-6640.

